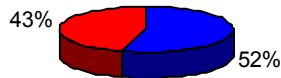# Hundreds of District Young People Need a Safe Family Environment

Living Situation of Children CFSA Serves

■ At Home   ■ In Foster Care

43%
52%
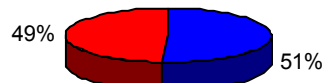
Ages of Children in CFSA Care
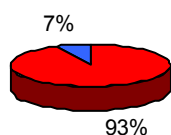
□ <6 yrs.   ■ 6-14 yrs.   ■ 15-21 yrs.

18%
40%
41%
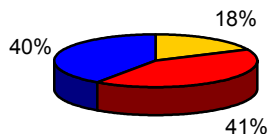
Gender of Children in CFSA Care

■ Female   ■ Male

49%
51%

Race of Children in CFSA Care

■ African American   ■ Other

7%
93%

CFSA is currently serving almost 5,000 children, with over 2,000 of them in foster care. About 300 of our foster children are hoping to be adopted.

- District children in foster care are about evenly divided between boys and girls

- Over 80 percent are between ages 6 and 21.

- About two-thirds are groups of brothers and sisters who we try to keep together whenever possible.

- The District foster care population is largely African-American.

Behind these bare statistics are wonderful children who urgently need safety, acceptance, support, guidance, and stability in a nurturing home environment. Each child has unique interests and gifts that a caring adult can recognize and encourage.

Removal from home is traumatic for children. From their perspective, they are wrenched from a familiar environment into the unknown. CFSA removes children (with court approval) only when they cannot be safe in their homes. To reduce trauma for the child and keep families together, our first choice of placement is always relatives. When extended family members are not an option, CFSA turns to other foster parents to provide safe havens.

Initially, foster care is temporary. It provides a safe, nurturing environment for children while CFSA helps parents overcome difficulties. While in foster care, children have regular visits with parents; attend school; and go to appointments for helping services such as evaluations, counseling, tutoring, and medical care. The goal is for children to return home as soon as they can be safe there. However, when a parent is unwilling or unable to provide a safe home environment within a reasonable time, CFSA (with court approval) changes the child's goal to guardianship or adoption. In general, we work to return children home within 15 months of initial placement in foster care—or to locate an adoptive home within nine months of a goal change to adoption. ■